

CIA INTERNAL USE ONLY

3 February 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Interview with Mr. Roger D. Fisher - Site for Proposed New CIA Building.

1. On 3 February 1956 Mr. Roger D. Fisher conferred with me in my office, in the presence of Mr. Lawrence R. Houston, with regard to the possible location of the proposed new CIA headquarters building in the District of Columbia. He first presented me with a memorandum entitled "Security Considerations Affecting Two Alternative Locations of CIA," a copy of which is attached. I read the memorandum and immediately told him that the last sentence of his first paragraph..."It is understood that Colonel White, Deputy Director of CIA, has stated that the Agency would be glad to locate some portion of the Agency at a site meeting all dispersal standards"...was in error and that I had not made this or any other statement with regard to this matter.

2. Our discussion lasted about three quarters of an hour and the gist of it is as follows:

I advised Mr. Fisher that we had been through all of the considerations set forth in his memorandum very carefully and many times and that there was nothing new in them. I explained that we already had a facility where we could locate a part of the Agency, and that, in any case, after repeated studies we had concluded that the great bulk of the organization would have to remain together. I then pointed out that at a District location under his proposal the basic problem would be no different from what it would be if the whole Agency located here. Without citing names or places, I reviewed the fact that a "Government" policy had been established which directed that we not locate in the District of Columbia, but, rather, on the fringe of metropolitan Washington, and that insofar as I knew these conditions had not been changed. I added that of course we had tried to keep current on this situation and were not relying on a letter received from the Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization about 31 December 1954. Mr. Fisher then asked me if I would check with the Office of Defense Mobilization to see if I were still correct. I told him that I had checked quite recently (as late as yesterday) and had no reason to believe that these conditions had been changed. I emphasized that CIA was in no position to reopen this matter and that in my judgment it was not in our best interests to do so.

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I then explained to Mr. Fisher the long delay and additional expense which would be encountered should a decision to locate in the District be made at this late date. I reminded him that he had said on any number of occasions that he was not a planner but merely wished to raise questions for the planners to consider and said that inasmuch as CIA had conducted itself with complete objectivity and had followed every procedure that it was required to follow by law I failed to understand why he persisted in his attempts to upset the Langley location in view of the fact that yesterday the National Capital Planning Commission had voted 7 to 5 in favor of our locating at Langley. He was hard-put to explain this but defended his position by saying that he did not consider this to be a Planning Commission vote since all of the professional planners had voted against us and the nonprofessionals had voted for us. I reminded him that I had noted that he had raised no similar objections when the vote went against us in December 6 to 5. At one point we discussed the favorable vote of the National Capital Regional Planning Council on the Langley site. We disagreed clearly in that he insisted that the vote of the Council to request CIA to build all of the roads, bridges, etc., was a definite condition of their approval. Mr. Houston and I of course insisted that this was entirely incorrect.

At this juncture Mr. Houston pointed out to Fisher that he, Fisher, had only one objective in mind, i.e., to keep us from going to Langley by any means at his disposal, and that he was not in a position to weigh the factors which this Agency had considered most carefully. Mr. Houston persisted forcefully that this was Mr. Fisher's prime motive and that he was not in a position to pass judgment on the entire matter. Mr. Fisher admitted that this was his motivation; however, he immediately added that he had become convinced that it was in the National interest that we locate in the District, rather than at Langley, and that he was motivated equally as strong, if not stronger, by this consideration. Emphasizing very emphatically that my remarks should not be misinterpreted, I reminded Fisher of the Canadians and Klaus Fuchs who, after their government had taken a position, had resorted to some pretty drastic actions because they sincerely believed their government was wrong. I tried to persuade Mr. Fisher that the decisions up to date had been decided according to Governmental policy and procedures and that I hated to see him persist in something to the contrary. He then began to compare his revolutionary campaign with the actions of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson at which time it seemed to me that that part of the discussion had reached a stage sufficiently ridiculous not to proceed further. I then said, "I take it that what you assume you are trying to do is helpful to CIA?" He responded affirmatively and said that he naturally assumed that we thought he was trying to be helpful and that the only reason we would not raise this issue was because we thought an irrevocable decision had been made. I assured him that CIA did not regard

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his actions as helpful, but, on the contrary, very detrimental and not in our best interests or that of the Government.

In response to his request for an explanation of statements made by Mr. Dulles that we preferred a District site, I very carefully explained to him that there definitely was a time when we had considered the District as a site along with several others, but that even though we might have felt tentatively that a District location would be preferable we did not complete an analysis of this possibility inasmuch as before it was completed it had been decided as a matter of Government policy that we should not locate in the District.

Mr. Fisher repeatedly referred to the "staff level" of experts in the Office of Defense Mobilization with whom he had talked and who were entirely sympathetic to his point of view. He implied that the attached memorandum had been prepared in collaboration with these experts and that it would be accepted by the Office of Defense Mobilization and the White House immediately if CIA would only request that the matter be reconsidered. He then asked me specifically whether I would, on a lower level than I had previously asked and specifically on the staff level with which he was dealing, request that this matter be reconsidered. I responded negatively, and he immediately stated that he then had no alternative but to take the whole matter to the "Hill" and do what he could. I said that this was, of course, his right and privilege but again repeated my hope that the Planning Commission having considered and voted favorably on this matter he would not continue to be destructive.

3. As he left, he insisted that I answer his question as to whether or not we would have abided by the Planning Commission's decision if the vote had been against us. I told him that I saw no reason why I needed to answer such a hypothetical question. I also stated that we had not yet accepted the favorable vote and emphasized to him that we would have no comment on the Planning Commission's vote or on the question of whether we would locate at Langley until we had received the report of the Planning Commission.

/s/

DD/S:LKW:laq

Distribution:

- 1 - General Counsel
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L. K. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

1 Encl.

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MEMORANDUM

SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING
TWO ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS OF CIA

The two alternatives considered are as follows:

The first is to locate the entire agency in one building or group of buildings at Langley, Virginia, about a mile and a half from the District line. The second alternative is to locate something more than half the agency within the District readily convenient to the other agencies served and some smaller portion in a different building at a truly dispersed location. It is understood that Colonel White, Deputy Director of CIA, has stated that the agency would be glad to locate some portion of the agency at a site meeting all dispersal standards.

The two advantages of moving away from the center of an assumed target area are: a) lessened risk of damage to the structure and personnel by a bomb blast and b) increased ease of evacuation from the target area. The Langley site is on exposed high ground less than 2 miles from the District line. It is about the same distance from the zero milestone as the corners of the District itself. A circle with a five mile radius will easily include the Langley site, the Pentagon, the Capitol and all of downtown Washington.

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The lessened risk of damage in locating at Langley compared with locating within the District is slight. This is particularly true as the size of the installation would be large enough to justify special attention in any attack.

From the point of view of increased ease of evacuation the situation at Langley is not good: The evacuation from Langley would presumably be by Route 193 leading northwest to Route 7 and then on that two lane highway. Route 193 is too narrow to carry two parallel lines of cars at any but a slow speed. Further, the four-lane parkway would stop at Langley causing a major bottleneck at the very point where CIA personnel would be imposed on the evacuation route.

From a District site near where CIA is now located, evacuation would be across the new eight-lane Constitution Avenue Bridge and then by any one of several major highways. There would be a further distance to travel from the District but the better highway position would appear to compensate for that. In short, the Langley site would appear to have no advantage over the District from the point of view of ease of evacuation.

The suggested alternative of locating a major part of the agency within the District and a minor part in a secure spot at a safe distance from Washington would appear to have substantial advantages. Those functions requiring

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day to day contact with other agencies could be located within walking distance of the State Department and with optimum efficiency for all peace time operations. Laboratories, long-range study projects and other functions not requiring such contact could be located well away from the District.

In the event of attack there would be fewer employees requiring evacuation from the Washington area. Regardless of damage to that area the agency would have available a substantial nucleus from which it could carry on its vital post-attack intelligence functions. The dispersed branch of the agency would be small enough so as not to constitute by itself a probable target.

There would undoubtedly be some inconvenience to the agency resulting from having a branch building at a dispersed location. This inconvenience in peace time operations might be no greater than that which would exist were the entire agency located at Langley. From the point of view of being prepared against every attack and considering the security requirements of post-attack operational capability, there can be no doubt but that to locate the agency at Langley would be worse than to locate the bulk of the agency within the District and a part of it at a truly dispersed site.